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ABSTRACT

Pacific Resources for Education and Learning (PREL) works with 10 American-affiliated Pacific entities: American Samoa, the Commonwealth of Northern Mariana Islands, the Federated States of Micronesia (Chuuk, Kosrae, Pohnpei, Yap), Guam, Hawaii, the Republic of the Marshall Islands, and the Republic of Palau. The survey raises awareness of the risk factors affecting educators in the Pacific entities and provides insight necessary to redress the concerns of students, policymakers, and educators around the region. The study identified risk factors affecting educators in Kosrae State. These risk factors might also play a role in teachers' and school administrators' absenteeism, attrition, and stress burnout. In Kosrae State, 144 teacher surveys and 12 administrator surveys were returned. Absenteeism among teachers and administrators does not appear to be a problem; however, absenteeism among administrators was one of the highest among Pacific entities. Administrators cited workshops, training, illness, funerals, and leave as reasons for their absenteeism. Approximately 28 percent of teachers reported that they may leave teaching within 2 years, citing low salaries, no school support, not enough materials and supplies, poor working conditions, and too much stress. Appendixes contain teacher and administrator questionnaires. (Contains 17 references.) (DFR)

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RETENTION AND ATTRITION OF PACIFIC SCHOOL TEACHERS AND ADMINISTRATORS (RAPSTA) STUDY

Kosrae State, Federated States of Micronesia

Research and Development Cadre

June 1998

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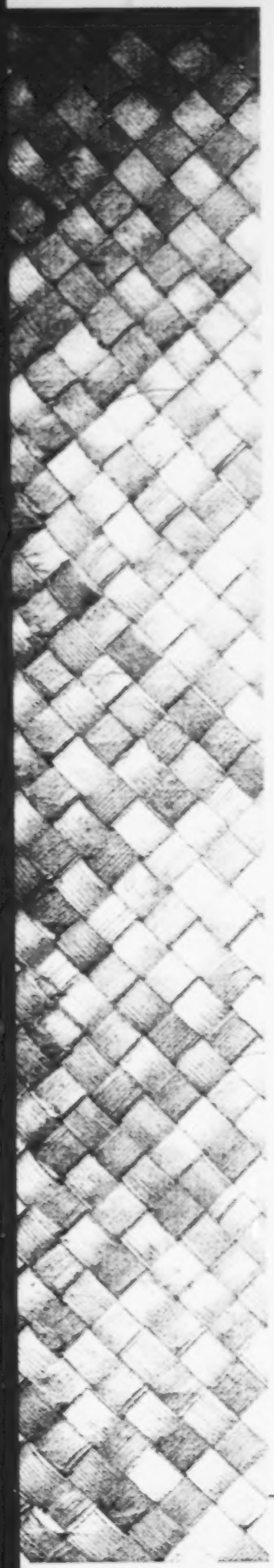

RETENTION AND ATTRITION OF PACIFIC SCHOOL TEACHERS AND ADMINISTRATORS (RAPSTA) STUDY

Kosrae State, Federated States of Micronesia

Research and Development Cadre

June 1998

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Table of Contents

Acknowledgments iii

Preface iv

I. Introduction 1

II. Methods 3

III. Findings 7

IV. Discussion 11

V. Limitations 12

VI. Recommendations 14

References 17

Appendices 18

List of Tables

1. Characteristics of RAPSTA Teacher Sample from Kosrae State 4

2. Characteristics of RAPSTA School Administrator Sample from Kosrae State 4

3. Reasons Why Teachers Are Away from School in Kosrae State 7

4. Reasons Why School Administrators Are Away from School in Kosrae State 7

5. Reasons for Leaving Teaching in Kosrae State 8

6. Reasons for Leaving School Administration in Kosrae State 9

7. MBI Subscale Mean Scores for Kosrae State Teachers and School Administrators Compared to the Norm Sample 10

8. Cut-Off Scores for MBI Subscale Categories 10

List of Figures

1. Personal accomplishment among teachers in Kosrae State 10

2. Emotional exhaustion among teachers in Kosrae State 10

3. Depersonalization among teachers in Kosrae State 10

4. Personal accomplishment among school administrators in Kosrae State 11

5. Emotional exhaustion among school administrators in Kosrae State 11

6. Depersonalization among school administrators in Kosrae State 11

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Preface

This study represents one step towards solving problems that plague many schools throughout the Pacific: high rates of absenteeism, attrition, and stress/burnout among teachers and school administrators. The data collected in this study reveal the extent of these problems and shed some light on possible contributing factors.

During coming months, R&D Cadre members will present this report to teachers and school administrators in each Pacific entity, soliciting feedback and suggestions that we anticipate will lead to the formulation of specific, entity-based solutions to these concerns.

I. Introduction

The mission of Pacific Resources for Education and Learning (PREL) is to *assist education, government, community agencies, businesses, and labor groups to maintain cultural literacy and improve the quality of life by helping to strengthen educational programs and processes for children, youth, and adults* (Pacific Resources for Education and Learning, 1996).

In order to carry out this mission, PREL has made a commitment to work in close partnership with the ten American-affiliated Pacific entities: American Samoa, the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, the Federated States of Micronesia (Chuuk, Kosrae, Pohnpei, Yap), Guam, Hawai'i, the Republic of the Marshall Islands, and the Republic of Palau. As a result of their very different forms of political affiliation with the United States, these ten states are referred to as *entities* in PREL's terminology.

As part of this work, PREL's Research and Development (R&D) Cadre has undertaken several studies in order to describe the educational experiences and opportunities of Pacific Islanders. The R&D Cadre is a group of Pacific educators consisting of one member from each department or ministry of education in the ten entities comprising PREL's service region, and one member representing the National Department of Education, Federated States of Micronesia.

Each entity has formed a local support team of researchers who assist the cadre member in carrying out research studies. The local R&D support teams range in size from five to thirteen members.

One of the studies conducted, *A Study of Risk Factors Among High School Students in the Pacific Region* (Pacific Region Educational Laboratory R&D Cadre, 1995) sparked interest in examining risk factors associated with adults working in Pacific schools. Open-ended questions answered by students participating in the 1995 study indicated that these students were concerned about teacher absenteeism. In entities where no substitute teacher pool is available, students' educational opportunities may be seriously compromised due to high rates of teacher absenteeism.

Frequent teacher absenteeism in the Pacific may have a strong impact on student achievement. For various reasons, such as lack of funds or human resources, substitute-teacher programs are lacking in many entities. Students might come to school, but a teacher might not be available to teach them. Not only does this affect access to educational opportunities and contribute to low achievement, it could also have an effect on attendance counts, which can adversely affect school funding, thus perpetuating a negative cycle.

Factors related to teacher and school administrator absenteeism have been identified in research conducted in American schools. However, similar research is lacking for the Pacific region. As a result, the PREL Board of directors recommended follow-up research detailing risk factors for teachers and school administrators. This recommendation was supported by the R&D Cadre members, who expressed interest in examining these risk factors within their respective entities. In addition, policy makers and program managers in the ten entities have expressed concern about the impact of teacher and administrator absenteeism, as well as attrition and stress/burnout, on student achievement.

In response to these concerns, a study was designed to describe the factors that affect Pacific Island educators and make them "at risk" for absenteeism, attrition, and stress and burnout. Merriam-Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary (1997) defines stress as "a physical, chemical, or emotional factor that causes bodily and mental tension." Research indicates that excessive stress might cause illness.

A condition termed "burnout" (DeRobbio, 1995) could also result from difficult and stressful work conditions. Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary defines this condition as "exhaustion of physical or emotional strength."

This study was guided by the following research questions:

1) What are the risk factors that affect Pacific school teachers and administrators?

2) What risk factors lead to absenteeism, attrition, and stress/burnout?

Of particular interest to the Kosrae Department of Education were teacher issues raised by high school students when they responded to questions posed during a study of at-risk students (PREL, 1995). In this study, students described their worst teachers: unprepared, unable to pace or explain lessons clearly, mean, critical, shows favoritism, shouts, swears, hits students, and is often absent or tardy. These behaviors could adversely affect students' learning abilities as evidenced by test results from the Federated States of Micronesia National Standardized Test and the College of Micronesia Entrance Tests. In addition, some good teachers in the Kosrae Department of Education have left the teaching profession to work elsewhere. These factors prompted the Kosrae Department of Education to participate in this study.

The RAPSTA study was designed to identify specific risk factors affecting educators in Kosrae State and other Pacific entities served by PREL. As part of the process, a literature review of teacher risk factors was performed and published (Hammond & Onikama, 1997). This review concluded that:

1) Factors associated with teacher absenteeism–such as child care, transportation difficulties, illness, and cultural demands–tend to be immediate obligations or concerns (Scott & Wimbush, 1991).

2) Factors associated with attrition–such as low salaries, poor benefits, and work overload–are chronic or habitual concerns (Wari, 1993).

3) Factors associated with stress/burnout–such as student misbehavior (Holmes & Rahe, 1967; Pelletier, 1977; American Psychiatric Association, 1994); anger, anxiety, or depression (DeRobbio & Iwanicki, 1996); and school reform (Farber & Ascher, 1992)–are daily nuisances.

These risk factors might also play a role in teacher and school administrator absenteeism, attrition, and stress/burnout in the Pacific region with its unique educational, cultural, and geographical contexts. Pacific schools have adopted the American system of education. However, this transplanted system exists parallel to a Pacific orientation and heritage influenced by Polynesian and Micronesian traditional values, cultural events, and environmental circumstances. The following examples were obtained from a literature review as well as from interviews with Pacific educators:

Cultural events. In some island communities, traditional feasts and funerals are important parts of village life. For instance, if a feast falls on a school day, it is likely that the teacher (who may hold a traditional title) will not go to school, but will prepare for the event. Family relationships with their attendant obligations are highly valued and honored among Pacific Islanders and may account for higher absenteeism rates among Pacific educators.

Family and village social roles. In many island communities, family and village relationships provide a social context that may overlook frequent absenteeism. For example, a teacher may be a member of a large and influential family, many of whom may be employed in the public school system. That teacher's absenteeism may, therefore, be overlooked. Although the traditional American ethic views such favoritism as inappropriate, it may be tolerated within the context of many Pacific lifestyles.

Culturally sanctioned time off. Culturally sanctioned time off may be granted to selected people in some entities. "Monday sickness," for example, takes place when male teachers, especially those who are young and single, are absent from school after a weekend of excess. Their absence is tolerated as a social and developmental pattern related to their youth.

Environmental factors. Unique weather patterns such as hurricanes and "super-typhoons" in the Pacific region may have an effect on absenteeism. Typhoon Paka, for example, recently decimated Guam, leaving it without electricity and forcing the closure of schools. In Hawai'i, giant winter swells may close roadways and limit access to schools. Flooding in low-lying islands and atolls can cause many teachers to miss school for one or more days.

The main purpose of this study was to raise awareness of risk factors affecting educators in the Pacific entities and to provide insight necessary to address the concerns of students, policy makers, and educators throughout the region. Hopefully, the results will stimulate interest and follow-up action as it relates to local professional development opportunities for Pacific educators.

Because of the region's remote geographical location and its distance from educator training programs, as well as the high costs associated with traveling to institutions of higher education, local departments of education must share responsibility for the development of programs or interventions geared towards maintaining the educational work force. Preventing the negative outcomes associated with risk factors can help educators to become more effective while working with their students and thus promote positive student outcomes. The study will also contribute to the fund of knowledge on absenteeism, attrition, and stress/burnout among educators in general, and Pacific educators in particular, thereby contributing to cross-cultural theory building. This, in turn, may assist the development of models and tools for promoting retention and reducing attrition and stress/burnout among educators in the Pacific and elsewhere.

II. Methods

The *Retention and Attrition of Pacific School Teachers and Administrators* (RAPSTA) study was conducted in ten American-affiliated Pacific entities during the spring of 1997. It was designed and conducted by PREL's R&D Cadre and its members' local support teams. PREL staff provided technical assistance.

R&D Cadre members participated in three PREL-sponsored seminars in which they designed the study, developed data collection instruments, and analyzed the data. Cadre members then shared the collected information with their local R&D support teams.

Subjects

The unit of analysis for the RAPSTA study is the elementary and secondary-level teacher and school administrator. In Kosrae State, 155 teacher surveys were distributed, and 144 completed surveys were returned, resulting in a 93 percent response rate. All 12 of Kosrae's school administrators completed the survey, yielding a 100 percent response rate.

Participants represented the total population of Kosrae State's school staff. Tables 1 and 2 summarize the subjects' demographic characteristics.

Table 1

Characteristics of RAPSTA Teacher Sample from Kosrae State

Demographic Characteristics		Number	Percentage
Gender	Female	39	27.1
	Male	93	64.6
	No Response	12	8.3
	TOTAL	**144**	**100.0**
Ethnicity	Caucasian	1	0.7
	Filipino	1	0.7
	Japanese	2	1.4
	Kosraean	127	88.2
	Mixed	2	1.4
	Others	3	2.1
	No Response	8	5.6
	TOTAL	**144**	**100.0**
Age	20 to 29	35	24.3
	30 to 39	42	29.2
	40 to 49	47	32.6
	50+	14	9.7
	No Response	6	4.2
	TOTAL	**144**	**100.0**
Marital Status	Never Married	32	22.2
	Married	102	70.8
	Separated	1	0.7
	Divorced	0	0.0
	Widowed	0	0.0
	No Response	9	6.3
	TOTAL	**144**	**100.0**
Education	HS Graduate	22	15.3
	Associate Degree	85	59.0
	Bachelor's Degree	24	16.7
	Master's Degree	2	1.4
	Other	1	0.7
	No Response	10	6.9
	TOTAL	**144**	**100.0**
Experience	1 - 4 Years	42	29.2
	5 - 10 Years	27	18.8
	11 - 14 Years	18	12.5
	15 - 20 Years	31	21.5
	20+ Years	15	10.4
	No Response	11	7.6
	TOTAL	**144**	**100.0**
Salary	<4,000	7	4.9
	4,000-4,999	29	20.1
	5,000-5,999	31	21.5
	6,000-6,999	18	12.5
	7,000-7,999	24	16.7
	8,000+	25	17.4
	No Response	10	6.9
	TOTAL	**144**	**100.0**

The majority of teachers are married Kosraean males, between the ages of 30 and 49, with an associate degree (59%) and one to ten years of teaching experience.

Table 2

Characteristics of RAPSTA School Administrator Sample from Kosrae State

Demographic Characteristics		Number	Percentage
Gender	Female	0	0.0
	Male	8	66.7
	No Response	4	33.3
	TOTAL	**12**	**100.0**
Ethnicity	Kosraean	12	100.0
	No Response	0	0.0
	TOTAL	**12**	**100.0**
Age	40 to 44	1	8.3
	45 to 49	3	25.0
	50 to 54	5	41.7
	55 to 59	3	25.0
	No Response	0	0.0
	TOTAL	**12**	**100.0**
Marital Status	Never Married	0	0.0
	Married	12	100.0
	Separated	0	0.0
	Divorced	0	0.0
	Widowed	0	0.0
	No Response	0	0.0
	TOTAL	**12**	**100.0**
Education	HS Graduate	3	25.0
	Associate Degree	8	66.7
	Bachelor's Degree	1	8.3
	Master's Degree	0	0.0
	Advanced Degree	0	0.0
	No Response	0	0.0
	TOTAL	**12**	**100.0**
Experience	1 - 4 Years	2	16.7
	5 - 10 Years	1	8.3
	11 - 14 Years	0	0.0
	15 - 20 Years	1	8.3
	20+ Years	8	66.7
	No Response	0	0.0
	TOTAL	**12**	**100.0**
Salary	9,000-9,999	5	41.7
	10,000-10,999	6	50.0
	11,000+	1	8.3
	No Response	0	0.0
	TOTAL	**12**	**100.0**

Most school administrators are married Kosraean males between the ages of 45 and 59, with an associate degree (66.7%) and more than twenty years of experience.

Sampling

Kosrae State education officials decided to include all classroom teachers and school administrators in this study.

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Instrumentation

Two similar data collection instruments were developed, one for teachers and another for school administrators (see Appendices). Each is a five-page survey with three sections: Section 1 consists of 2-1/2 pages of forced-choice and short-answer, self-reported background information as well as absenteeism data for the school year in which the survey was administered. Section 2 is a single-page rating sheet outlining stress/burnout feelings; it was adapted from the Maslach Burnout Inventory–Educators Survey and Human Services Survey (Maslach, Jackson, & Leiter, 1996). Section 3 is also a single-page rating sheet detailing reasons why an educator might quit teaching or working as a school administrator. Individuals did not identify themselves by name, and all responses were kept confidential.

Section 1 - Demographic Characteristics and Absenteeism Data

Section 1 gathered relevant personal information to be used in examining teacher/school administrator retention and attrition. Questions asked about gender, age, ethnicity, marital status, educational attainment, salary, experience, and current teaching load. Additional data on the number of instructional days away from school during the 1996-1997 school year (SY) and the reasons for those absences were collected. For example, participants were asked to write down the number of days they were away from school in SY 1996-1997 for reasons such as funerals, birthdays, storms, heavy rains, or floods.

Section 2 - Stress and Burnout Ratings

The purpose of Section 2, as a means of measuring employee stress/burnout, was to discover how respondents view their jobs and the people with whom they work closely. The Maslach Burnout Inventory (MBI) is recognized as the leading measure of burnout. "It is the best known and most widely used questionnaire for the assessment of individual occupational burnout among human service workers and others whose work involves intense interaction with people" (Offerman, 1986, p. 419). The MBI is a 22-item, self-report inventory of three subscales, which were developed to measure dimensions that the authors felt best defined burnout. These subscales include Low Personal Accomplishment (8 items), Emotional Exhaustion (9 items), and Depersonalization (5 items).

- Low Personal Accomplishment results when teachers evaluate themselves negatively, particularly in relation to their work with students (DeRobbio, 1995). Those who report low personal accomplishment may disagree with the statement, "I have accomplished many worthwhile things in teaching" (Maslach, Jackson, & Schwab, 1986, p. 2).

- Emotional Exhaustion "is the tired and fatigued feeling that develops as emotional energies are drained. When these feelings become chronic, educators find they can no longer give of themselves to students as they once could" (Maslach, Jackson, & Leiter, 1996, p. 28). They may agree with the statement, "I feel I'm working too hard on my job" (Maslach & Jackson, 1986, p. 2).

- Depersonalization results when educators "no longer have positive feelings about their students" (Maslach, Jackson, & Leiter, 1996, p. 28). They may develop negative or cynical attitudes and feelings about them and may agree with the statement, "I don't really care what happens to some of my students" (Maslach, Jackson, & Schwab, 1986, p. 2).

Respondents rated each of the 22 items in terms of the frequency that these feelings occur, ranging from "never" (0) to "every day" (6).

To make the survey instrument more appropriate to the Pacific region, the MBI Educator's Survey (Maslach, Jackson, & Schwab, 1986) and the MBI Human Resources Survey (Maslach & Jackson, 1986) were adapted, with permission from the pub-

lisher. Seven of the 22 items were modified to clarify vocabulary and idiomatic phrases. Since many of the respondents in the Pacific entities speak English as a second or foreign language, words such as "exhilarated" and "callous," or expressions such as "at the end of my rope" were stated in more understandable terms. These modifications were made by two Pacific-entity educators who are familiar with the English proficiency of teachers in the region. It was determined that these language-clarifying changes would not significantly alter the instrument's technical qualities. The MBI has been validated for use in countries around the world in a number of translations (Maslach, Jackson, & Leiter, 1996, p. 1).

Section 3 - Reasons for Leaving the Profession

The purpose of Section 3 was to understand why teachers and school administrators leave their jobs. Respondents were asked to rate each of 19 statements on a four-point Likert-type scale from "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree." For example, teachers rated their level of agreement with two statements: "I might leave my current teaching job for a better teaching position within the next two years;" and "I might leave teaching altogether within the next two years." They were also asked to rate their agreement by noting reasons why they might quit teaching. Reasons for leaving the profession, as listed on the survey, were selected because of their prevalence in attrition literature. Additional reasons were included on the basis of their perceived importance by educators in the Pacific region.

Procedures

The R&D Cadre members and their local support teams coordinated the survey administration. They planned meetings to inform school staff about the RAPSTA study, its purpose, rationale for the selection of schools, and the importance of serious responses to the survey. In these meetings, schedules for data collection were developed and confirmed. Plans for necessary logistical support and accommodations were also communicated to the staff.

An important part of the sampling procedure was the administration of the survey instruments. In Kosrae State, teachers assembled in their respective schools, received instructions in Kosraean and English, and filled out the surveys in group settings. The completed forms were collected on site. For the school administrator surveys, principals assembled in one room at the central office and the instrument was read aloud to them, item by item. Again, instruction was given in both Kosraean and English, and the completed forms were collected on site.

The data were collected from April through June 1997, allowing adequate time for personnel to complete the surveys and for PREL staff to follow up on the status of returned surveys. The local support team collected the completed surveys, then forwarded them to PREL in Honolulu for data entry and preliminary analysis.

III. Findings

This section features general findings on absenteeism, attrition, and stress/burnout among teachers and school administrators in Kosrae State. It highlights findings in three areas: (1) reasons for school absences, (2) possible reasons for attrition in the education profession, and (3) comparisons of Potential Leavers with Non-Leavers.

Reasons for School Absences

During the 1996-1997 school year, teachers in Kosrae State were away from work for an average of 5.41 days. School administrators were away from work for an average of 22.66 days. Table 3 shows reasons why teachers were away from work and the frequency of absence. Table 4 shows reasons why school administrators were away from work and the frequency of absence.

Table 3

Reasons Why Teachers Are Away from School in Kosrae State

Rank	Reason	Average # of Days Away
1	Funerals	1.20
2	Personal illness	1.19
3	Maternity leave	0.67
4	Family member sick	0.48
5	Meetings and workshops	0.40
6	Administrative leave	0.24
7	Suspension	0.14
8	Community responsibilities	0.12
8	Educational leave	0.12
9	Vacation	0.11
10	Family responsibilities	0.10
10	Child care	0.10
10	Storm, heavy rain, flood, etc.	0.10
11	Other	0.09
12	Lack of instructional materials	0.08
13	Stress	0.05
13	Transportation problem	0.05
14	Church activities	0.04
14	Relationship with supervisors	0.04
14	Training leave	0.04
15	Jury duty	0.03
16	Working conditions	0.02
17	Birthdays	0.00
17	Military training	0.00
17	Paternity leave	0.00
17	Relationship with co-workers	0.00
17	Weddings	0.00
	TOTAL	**5.41**

In Kosrae State, attending funerals was the leading cause of teacher absence from school, with an average of 1.20 days away. The next most frequently cited reason was personal illness, with an average of 1.19 days; followed by maternity leave, with an average of 0.67 days; family member sickness, with an average of 0.48 days; and meetings and workshops, with an average of 0.40 days.

Table 4

Reasons Why School Administrators Are Away from School in Kosrae State

Rank	Reason	Average # of Days Away
1	Meetings and workshops	6.00
2	Training leave	5.83
3	Personal illness	3.33
4	Educational leave	2.58
5	Funerals	1.75
6	Administrative leave	0.83
7	Family responsibilities	0.75
8	Vacation	0.67
9	Community responsibilities	0.42
10	Family member sick	0.25
11	Child care	0.17
12	Church activities	0.08
13	Birthdays	0.00
13	Jury duty	0.00
13	Lack of instructional materials	0.00
13	Maternity leave	0.00
13	Military training	0.00
13	Other	0.00
13	Paternity leave	0.00
13	Relationship with co-workers	0.00
13	Relationship with supervisors	0.00
13	Storm, heavy rain, flood, etc.	0.00
13	Stress	0.00
13	Suspension	0.00
13	Transportation problem	0.00
13	Weddings	0.00
13	Working conditions	0.00
	TOTAL	**22.66**

The leading reasons for absence among Kosrae State school administrators were education-related functions. Both meetings and workshops, and training leave accounted for an average of six days each, while personal illness averaged 3.33 days. Educational leave averaged 2.58 days, and funerals averaged 1.75 days.

Reasons for Attrition in the Education Profession

Respondents rated 17 reasons for leaving the teaching or school administration fields on a four-point Likert-type scale from "strongly agree" to "strongly disagree." In order to judge the technical significance of correlations between responses on each item, this ordinal scale was collapsed into two categories: "strongly disagree" and "disagree" were counted as DISAGREE; "strongly agree" and "agree" were counted as AGREE. Percentage of agreement was then calculated for each reason.

In Kosrae State, 27.78 percent (N=40) of all teachers agreed that they might leave teaching within the next two years. For purposes of analysis, two categories were created: Potential Leavers and Non-Leavers. Non-Leavers are those who disagreed with the statement, "I might leave teaching within the next two years." Table 5 ranks the reasons teachers gave for leaving teaching, and compares Potential Leavers with Non-Leavers.

Poor working conditions, no support from school administration, and low salaries were among the top reasons for leaving teaching in Kosrae State. These reasons were ranked among the top five by teachers who were planning to leave as well as by those who were not.

A statistical test (Chi^2) was performed to find out whether the response patterns of Potential Leavers and Non-Leavers are different for each possible reason for leaving teaching. Potential Leavers are more likely to leave because of too many responsibilities. It was also found that Potential Leavers are less likely than Non-Leavers to cite retirement and personal health problems as reasons for leaving. More than 50 percent of the teachers in this study are under the age of 40; therefore, they might not consider personal health problems and retirement as plausible reasons to leave teaching within the next two years.

In Kosrae State, 33.33 percent (N=4) of the school administrators agreed that they might leave educational administration within the next two years (Potential Leavers). Table 6 ranks the potential reasons these administrators gave for leaving the school administration field, and compares Potential Leavers with Non-Leavers. Non-Leavers are those who disagreed with the statement, "I might leave educational administration altogether within the next two years."

There were many reasons why Potential Leavers might consider leaving school administration (see Table 6). A statistical test (Fisher Exact Test) was performed to find out whether the response patterns of Potential Leavers and Non-Leavers are different for each possible reason for leaving school administration. Following Cochran (1954), the Fisher Exact Test was used because of the small sample size (N=12). Potential Leavers were found to be less likely than Non-Leavers to cite no support from central office administration and promotion as reasons to leave. Therefore, other reasons underlie the desire for Potential Leavers to leave school administration.

Table 5

Reasons for Leaving Teaching in Kosrae State

If I quit teaching, it would be because of ...		Potential Leavers		Non-Leavers	
		% Agree	Rank	% Agree	Rank
poor working conditions		71.1	4	78.7	1
no support from school administration		77.5	2	76.9	2
no support from central office		66.7	6	76.3	3
too much stress		69.2	5	55.8	8
poor relationships with parents		38.5	11	32.0	14
students' bad attitudes		38.5	11	37.3	13
my lack of control over school policies		23.1	15	29.0	15
poor benefits		36.8	13	45.7	9
personal health problems	*	35.9	14	60.3	7
too many disagreements about how to teach		37.5	12	38.2	12
not enough school materials and supplies		74.4	3	60.8	6
low salaries		80.0	1	65.8	5
too many responsibilities	**	48.7	8	24.7	16
pressure from the community		40.0	10	41.1	11
retirement	**	43.6	9	70.7	4
promotion		56.4	7	44.0	10
poor relationship with other teachers		18.0	16	23.7	17

*$p \leq .05$
**$p \leq .01$

Table 6

Reasons for Leaving Administration in Kosrae State

If I quit being a school administrator, it would be because of ...	Potential Leavers		Non-Leavers	
	% Agree	Rank	% Agree	Rank
poor working conditions	20.0	3	40.0	6
no support from school staff	20.0	3	33.3	7
no support from central office administration *	40.0	2	100.0	1
too much stress	40.0	2	33.3	7
poor relationships with parents	0.0	4	20.0	8
students' bad attitudes	20.0	3	16.7	9
my lack of control over school policies	20.0	3	33.3	7
poor benefits	40.0	2	16.7	9
personal health problems	40.0	2	50.0	5
too many disagreements about how to run my school	40.0	2	0.0	10
not enough school materials and supplies	60.0	1	50.0	5
low salaries	40.0	2	83.3	2
too many responsibilities	20.0	3	16.7	9
pressure from the community	0.0	4	50.0	5
retirement	40.0	2	80.0	3
promotion *	0.0	4	60.0	4
poor relationship with teachers	20.0	3	0.0	10
poor relationship with staff	20.0	3	20.0	8
political reasons	40.0	2	16.7	9

* $p \leq .10$

Comparison of Potential Leavers with Non-Leavers

The relationship between stress, burnout, and reported desire to leave the education field was examined in order to provide assistance to program managers and staff developers who work to improve school climate.

1. A *high degree of burnout* is reflected in high scores on the Emotional Exhaustion and Depersonalization subscales, and in low scores on the Personal Accomplishment subscale.

2. A *medium degree of burnout* is reflected in moderate scores on the three subscales.

3. A *low degree of burnout* is reflected in low scores on the Emotional Exhaustion and Depersonalization subscales, and in high scores on the Personal Accomplishment subscale.

Table 7 shows the comparison between mean scores for teacher and school administrator respondents and the norm sample. Kosrae State teachers and school administrators express a lower sense of personal accomplishment than the norm sample. Both groups also reported that they are less emotionally exhausted and do not feel as depersonalized as those in the norm sample. Therefore, in Kosrae State, a low sense of personal accomplishment, rather than emotional exhaustion and depersonalization, may contribute to occupational burnout among educators.

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Table 7

MBI Subscale Scores for Kosrae State Teachers and School Administrators Compared to the Norm Sample

MBI Subscale	Sample Size	Mean Score
Personal Accomplishment (PA)		
Kosrae State Teachers	144	31.6
Kosrae State School Administrators	12	27.3
Norm Sample	4,163	33.5
Emotional Exhaustion (EE)		
Kosrae State Teachers	144	20.1
Kosrae State School Administrators	12	11.9
Norm Sample	4,163	21.3
Depersonalization (DP)		
Kosrae State Teachers	144	7.0
Kosrae State School Administrators	12	4.3
Norm Sample	4,163	11.0

In order to analyze how Potential Leavers compare to Non-Leavers on the MBI subscales, scores were classified into high, moderate, and low categories. To make interpretation easier, the suggested cut-off scores used by MBI authors to classify low and high Personal Accomplishment were reversed. That is, a high score in this report means a high sense of personal accomplishment. According to the authors (Maslach, Jackson, & Leiter, 1996), personal accomplishment is a reverse scale, which means that high scores denote a high lack of personal accomplishment. We found this to be confusing and, thus, made these changes for our reporting purposes. The following cut-off scores were used:

Table 8

Cut-Off Scores for MBI Subscale Categories

MBI Subscale	High	Moderate	Low
Personal Accomplishment	≥ 37	31-36	≤ 30
Emotional Exhaustion	≥ 27	17-26	≤ 16
Depersonalization	≥ 14	9-13	≤ 8

Figures 1-6 display differences between teacher (Figures 1-3) and school administrator (Figures 4-6) Potential Leavers and Non-Leavers on the three MBI subscales. Teachers who might leave have a slightly lower sense of personal accomplishment than those who plan to stay, and they are somewhat more emotionally exhausted than Non-Leavers (adding the percentages in the high and moderate categories). Both groups experience low levels of depersonalization.

While school administrators in general report a low sense of personal accomplishment, those who plan to leave have an even lower sense of personal accomplishment, are more emotionally exhausted, and experience higher levels of depersonalization than Non-Leavers.

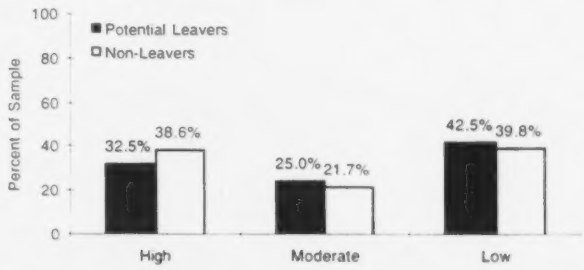

Figure 1. **Personal accomplishment among teachers in Kosrae State**

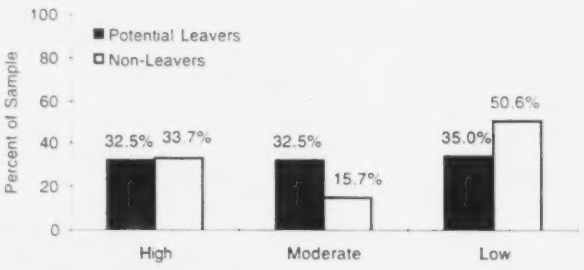

Figure 2. **Emotional exhaustion among teachers in Kosrae State**

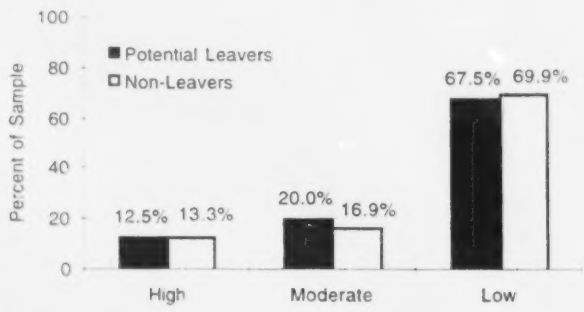

Figure 3. **Depersonalization among teachers in Kosrae State**

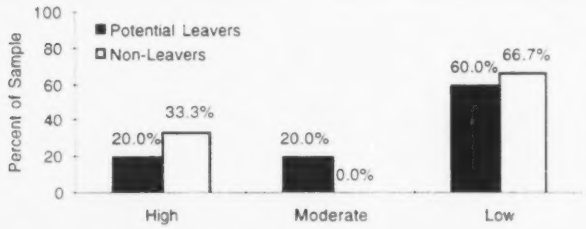

Figure 4. **Personal accomplishment among school administrators in Kosrae State**

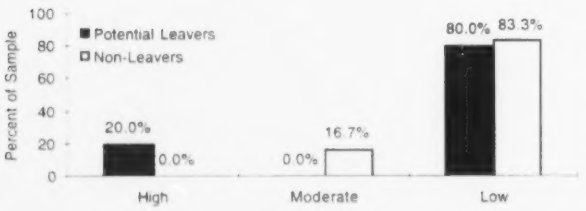

Figure 5. **Emotional exhaustion among school administrators in Kosrae State**

Figure 6. **Depersonalization among school administrators in Kosrae State**

VI. Discussion

Absenteeism

Absenteeism among teachers in Kosrae State does not appear to be a problem. For example, the average number of days away from school (5.41) is one of the lowest among the entities. Reasons for absences are those one would expect: funerals, personal illness, maternity leave, and sickness in the family. These are factors associated with absenteeism that tend to be of immediate concern to teachers (Scott & Wimbush, 1991). Funerals have always been an important event in the Kosraean culture, and they require almost every community member's involvement. Therefore, it is not surprising that attendance at funerals is the top stated reason for absences.

The average number of days that school administrators were absent was 22.66 days–one of the highest averages among the entities. The top five reasons that school administrators cited for spending time away from school include: meetings and work-

shops, training leave, personal illness, educational leave, and funerals. Three of these reasons can be considered education-related absences over which school administrators may have little or no control. Often, they are required to attend week-long meetings and workshops scheduled by the Central Office.

Attrition

Approximately 28 percent of teachers in Kosrae State report that, within the next two years, they may leave for the following reasons: low salaries, no support from school administration, not enough school materials and supplies, poor working conditions, and too much stress. These reasons for leaving are among the chronic or habitual, attrition-related factors identified by Wari (1993): low salaries, poor benefits, and work overload. Teachers in Kosrae State may feel that teaching is not a professional career; otherwise, its professional status would be reflected in higher salaries. They may feel that they are underpaid in relation to their heavy workload. In addition, teachers often mentioned that they receive no support from school administration, and that their needs and concerns are seldom addressed by appropriate personnel. Furthermore, teachers have voiced concerns over a lack of materials and supplies–a lack that may be due to reduced funding for the Kosrae State educational system as a result of the Compact of Free Association phase-out. Poor working conditions may also be a contributing factor for those wanting to leave the teaching profession. Teachers referred to the difficulties associated with small classrooms, worn-out desks, lack of textbooks, and too many classes to teach. Cumulatively, all of these reasons may lead to a high degree of stress and, eventually, to a desire to leave teaching.

Thirty-three percent (N=4) of school administrators plan to leave within the next two years. They cite many reasons for leaving, but the small number of Potential Leavers limits interpretation of these results. All school administrators in Kosrae State are 45 years of age or older; therefore, both Potential Leavers and Non-Leavers are likely to cite retirement as a reason for leaving school administration.

Burnout

In Kosrae State, both teachers and school administrators report a lower sense of personal accomplishment than those in the norm sample, and school administrators report a significantly lower level than teachers.

Teachers who might leave the teaching profession have a slightly lower sense of personal accomplishment than those who plan to stay. They are also more emotionally exhausted than Non-Leavers. Both groups experience low levels of depersonalization. Thus, Potential Leavers may experience some aspects of occupational burnout.

Although two out of three school administrators have a low sense of personal accomplishment, those who plan to leave have a lower sense of personal accomplishment, are more emotionally exhausted, and experience higher levels of depersonalization than Non-Leavers. Thus, school administrators who plan to leave appear to be experiencing all aspects of occupational burnout.

V. Limitations

The Challenge of Language and Culture

Conducting research across diverse linguistic and cultural groups is a challenging task. The language in which research is conducted can limit the accurate interpretation of results. Expectations regarding task importance and response candor may vary from culture to culture. Thus, results from cross-cultural studies may be difficult to interpret.

While English is the language of wider communication in all of the American-affiliated Pacific enti-

ties, respondents to the surveys in this study varied in their use and comprehension of English. For some, English might be a first language; for others, it might be a second or third language, used to a much lesser extent than the vernacular. Thus, particular vocabulary, grammatical structures, or instructions may have been problematic.

To adjust for some for these potential errors in measurement, native language/culture informants, who are members of the R&D Cadre or entity local support teams, provided the following expert assistance:

- developed and piloted questions used in the survey;
- revised potentially confusing items from the Maslach instrument;
- in many cases, administered surveys in group settings, leading respondents through each item and clarifying meanings upon request; and
- provided translations, where necessary, especially in geographically isolated outer-island settings.

Culture-specific interpretations concerning the importance of research, ways of responding, and the meanings of specific terms might all affect results. R&D Cadre members made special efforts to work with their respective departments or ministries of education and directors to ensure that teachers and school administrators took their responses to the survey seriously. In many cases, entity-wide meetings were held to explain the study, its importance, and the need for truthful data. Because the study was designed by members of each department of education, and was intended to investigate issues of importance to the entity, some support was ensured. The study was discussed at principals' and teachers' meetings; support for administration and data collection was provided by the entity department or ministry of education.

Instrumentation

All data collected in this study came from self-report questionnaires. This method of data collection was selected because of its perceived advantages for large-scale research. Those advantages include:

- Questionnaires are relatively easy and inexpensive to administer
- Questionnaires can be designed to ensure anonymity
- Respondents answer at their own pace
- Questions are standardized

However, self-report questionnaires also have limitations—responses may not always be truthful or accurate. Some respondents might make careless errors, such as checking the wrong box or writing the incorrect number. They might purposely answer questions with incorrect information because they want to give a favorable impression or avoid potentially embarrassing admissions. Or, they might misinterpret questions and respond inaccurately.

The R&D Cadre pilot-tested the questionnaires in order to improve wording so that respondents might better interpret the meanings of questions. Additionally, directions for completing the questionnaires and administration procedures were purposefully designed to ensure anonymity. However, even with these precautions, hindsight tells us that specific changes might have improved the validity of responses. In particular, the following limitations are noted:

1. Items that required respondents to check boxes on the right were somewhat confusing. The items should have been transposed so that the boxes were on the left.
2. Questions measuring attrition could have been phrased with greater clarity. Rather than asking if the respondents might leave and reasons that might cause them to leave, perhaps asking whether or not they were going to leave and why would have provided more definitive information.

3. In order to assure respondents of anonymity and foster truthfulness in responses, surveys did not ask for individuals' names. However, they did request the names of schools. In entities where there are few schools and a limited number of teachers (e.g., one per grade level), this may not have been sufficient to guarantee anonymity, and, consequently, honesty in response.

Analysis

Non-responses to items on the questionnaires could limit the validity of some results. For example, in order to analyze differences between teachers who are Potential Leavers and Non-Leavers, only those who responded to the question "I might leave teaching within the next two years" and each of the reasons for leaving could be included in the analyses (cross-tabulations). In some instances, large portions of the sample did not respond to either the "I might leave" question or one of the reasons.

Therefore, conclusions based on such results may only be generalized on the basis of those who were willing to respond. There may be systematic differences between respondents and non-respondents. For example, if non-respondents were more likely to experience depersonalization at work and, therefore, did not care to respond to all items, then conclusions based on results in which they did not participate would under-identify this risk factor in the population.

Although standardized group administration practices included requests to respond to all items, these requests were not sufficient. Moreover, standardized administration was not always possible.

Non-responses on the Maslach Burnout Inventory were also a problem. In order to calculate each subscale score, all items that contributed to that subscale must have been answered. If a respondent left one item out, the subscale in which that item was included could not be computed. Therefore, the extent of burnout may be underrepresented.

VI. Recommendations

The recommendations provided in this section of the report are based on the general findings concerned with absenteeism, attrition, and stress/burnout among teachers and school administrators in Kosrae State. Findings in three areas are highlighted: (1) reasons for absences, (2) possible reasons for attrition and the education profession, and (3) comparisons of Potential Leavers and Non-Leavers.

Recommendations Regarding Findings on Absenteeism

In Kosrae State, teachers were away from work an average of 5.41 days; school administrators were away from work an average of 22.66 days, one of the highest rates in the region. Reasons included meetings and workshops, and training leave, both with an average of six days each. Although attending meetings and workshops is an unavoidable part of an educator's professional life, the frequency of school administrators' meetings, workshops, and other reasons for being away from school should be critically assessed.

Recommendations Regarding Findings on Attrition

In Kosrae State, 28 percent of teachers agreed that they might quit teaching within the next two years. Among administrators, 33 percent agreed that they might leave their jobs in the near future. Due to the limited pool of potential educators within this island community, a pro-active program that will reduce the attrition rate of teachers and administrators should be designed and implemented in the Kosrae State public school system. Staff stability, in turn, could contribute to better student performance and achievement.

Recommendations Regarding Findings on Stress/Burnout

1. A comprehensive program to reduce stress and burnout, particularly for school administrators in Kosrae State, should be designed and implemented. Such a program may contribute to improved attendance and sense of well-being for those professionals who work most closely with students.

2. The sense of low personal accomplishment among both Potential Leavers and Non-Leavers may be a reflection of a cultural norm. In many Asian and Pacific cultures, it is considered inappropriate to speak highly about oneself. The questions on the Maslach Burnout Inventory that pertain to personal accomplishment ask respondents to rate themselves on ability and competency. Teachers and administrators may have rated themselves lower due to their cultural sense of modesty. Perhaps the concepts of stress and burnout are regarded differently in the Pacific than on the U.S. Mainland. This possible area of research may provide insight into the psychological construct of burnout in culturally diverse contexts.

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Appendices

Appendix A: RAPSTA Teacher Questionnaire

Appendix B: RAPSTA School Administrator Questionnaire

Appendix A

Retention and Attrition of
Pacific School Teachers and Administrators
(RAPSTA) Study

Teacher Questionnaire

Created by the

Research and Development Cadre

American Samoa Department of Education
Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands Public School System
Federated States of Micronesia National Department of Education
Guam Department of Education
Chuuk State Department of Education
Hawai'i State Department of Education
Kosrae State Department of Education
Pohnpei State Department of Education
Yap State Department of Education
Republic of the Marshall Islands Ministry of Education
Republic of Palau Ministry of Education
with the assistance of
Pacific Resources for Education and Learning

PREL

Retention and Attrition of Pacific School Teachers and Administrators (RAPSTA) Study
Teacher Questionnaire

SECTION 1

The purpose of this section is to understand what factors cause teachers to be away from school. All responses will be kept anonymous. Please complete this section by filling in the requested information. Please print your responses and check (✓) boxes () as appropriate. Remember, DO NOT PUT YOUR NAME ON THIS QUESTIONNAIRE. It is important that all responses be anonymous.

School:_____ **Date**: _____

Location: Am. Samoa Guam CNMI Hawai'i RMI
Pohnpei Chuuk Kosrae Yap Palau

Gender: M F **Place of birth:** _____
(Entity or State or Country)

Ethnic heritage: _____
(Ethnicity of Parents)

Age:
15-19 20-24 25-29 30-34 35-39 40-44
45-49 50-54 55-59 60-64 65 +

Current marital status:
Never Married Married Separated Divorced Widowed

Highest level of education attained:
High School Graduate Associate Degree Bachelor Degree
Master Degree Other (specify)

Major field of study: _____
(Examples: Elementary Education, Math, Science, Agriculture, etc.)

Current annual salary: $_____(per year)

Years of teaching experience:
1 - 4 5 - 10 11 - 14 15 - 20 21 or more

What grades do you currently teach?
(check all that apply)
How many students do you teach?
(put in number per grade level)

K	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12

For elementary teachers who teach in self-contained settings, please check the subject areas you are currently teaching.

✓	Subject areas you teach (put a ✓ in column on left)	✓	Subject areas you teach (put a ✓ in column on left)
	Language Arts/English		Art
	Language Arts/Vernacular		Music
	Math		Health
	Science		Physical Education
	Social Studies		Guidance
	Other (specify)		Other (specify)

For secondary teachers who teach in departmentalized settings, please check the subject area(s) and number of class periods you are currently teaching.

	Number of class periods you teach (put a ✓ in the appropriate columns)						
Subject area(s) you teach	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Language Arts/English							
Language Arts/Vernacular							
Math							
Science							
Social Studies							
Vocational Education (specify)							
Business Education							
Computers							
Art							
Music							
Physical Education							
Other (specify)							

If you have had jobs other than teaching, please list them below.

Previous employment other than teaching	Number of years

Total number of instructional days you were away from school this year (SY '96 -'97):

None 1-5 6-10 11-15 16-20 20 +

Write the number of days you were away from school in SY '96 -'97 for the reasons listed below.

Reason	Number of Days	Reason	Number of Days
funerals		working conditions	
birthdays		relationship with co-workers	
child care		stress	
transportation problem		meetings and workshops	
personal illness		administrative leave	
family member sick		educational leave	
family responsibilities (errands)		training leave	
community responsibilities		church activities	
storm, heavy rain or flood		maternity leave	
vacation		paternity leave	
lack of instructional materials		suspension	
relationship with supervisor		jury duty	
wedding		military training	
other (specify)		other (specify)	

SECTION **2**

This section of the questionnaire contained directions and 22 items intended to measure teachers' stress and burnout. This section was modified and reproduced by special permission of the Publisher, Consulting Psychologists Press, Palo Alto, CA 94303 from ***Maslach Burnout Inventory–Educators Survey*** *by Christina Maslach, Susan E. Jackson, & Richard L. Schwab. Copyright 1986 by Consulting Psychologists Press, Inc. All rights reserved. Permission for reproduction of the instrument in this report was not granted.*

SECTION 3

The purpose of this section is to understand what makes teachers leave their jobs. Below are listed statements made about quitting a teaching job. Place a check (✓) in the column next to each statement that best reflects how much *you agree or disagree* with the statement. Please respond to all statements.

MAKE ONE ✓ MARK ON EACH LINE.

Statement	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
I might leave my current teaching job for a better teaching position within the next two years.				
I might leave teaching all together within the next two years.				
If I quit teaching, it would be because of . . .				
poor working conditions.				
no support from school administration.				
no support from central office administration.				
too much stress.				
poor relationships with parents.				
students' bad attitudes.				
my lack of control over school policies.				
poor benefits (health insurance, retirement, etc.).				
personal health problems.				
too many disagreements about how to teach.				
not enough school materials and supplies.				
low salaries.				
too many responsibilities.				
pressure from the community.				
retirement.				
promotion.				
poor relationship with other teachers.				

Thank you for your assistance. Please return this questionnaire to the large envelope which has been placed on one of the desks in the room.

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Appendix B

Retention and Attrition of
Pacific School Teachers and Administrators
(RAPSTA) Study

School Administrator Questionnaire

Created by the

Research and Development Cadre

American Samoa Department of Education
Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands Public School System
Federated States of Micronesia National Department of Education
Guam Department of Education
Chuuk State Department of Education
Hawai'i State Department of Education
Kosrae State Department of Education
Pohnpei State Department of Education
Yap State Department of Education
Republic of the Marshall Islands Ministry of Education
Republic of Palau Ministry of Education
with the assistance of
Pacific Resources for Education and Learning

PREL

Retention and Attrition of Pacific School Teachers and Administrators (RAPSTA) Study
School Administrator Questionnaire

SECTION 1

The purpose of this section is to understand what factors cause school administrators to be away from school. All responses will be kept anonymous. Please complete this section by filling in the requested information. Please print your responses and check (✓) boxes () as appropriate. Remember, DO NOT PUT YOUR NAME ON THIS QUESTIONAIRE. It is important that all responses be anonymous.

Date: _____

Location: Am. Samoa Guam CNMI Hawai`i RMI
Pohnpei Chuuk Kosrae Yap Palau

Gender: M F **Place of birth:** _____
(Entity or State or Country)

Ethnic heritage: _____
(Ethnicity of Parents)

Age:
15-19 20-24 25-29 30-34 35-39 40-44
45-49 50-54 55-59 60-64 65 +

Current marital status:
Never Married Married Separated Divorced Widowed

Highest level of education attained:
High School Graduate Associate Degree Bachelor Degree
Master Degree Other (specify)

Major field(s) of study: _____
(Examples: School Administration, Curriculum & Instruction, Elementary Education, Math, etc.)

Current annual salary: $_____(per year)

Total school enrollment: _____

Students enrolled by grade: What is the student enrollment at your school by grade?

K	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12

Your current position:
principal vice-principal head teacher
teaching principal teaching vice-principal

Total number of days you were away from school in SY '96 -'97:

None 1-5 6-10 11-15 16-20 20 +

Write the number of days you were away from school in SY '96 -'97 for the reasons listed below.

Reason	Number of Days	Reason	Number of Days
funerals		working conditions	
birthdays		relationship with co-workers	
child care		stress	
transportation problem		meetings and workshops	
personal illness		administrative leave	
family member sick		educational leave	
family responsibilities (errands)		training leave	
community responsibilities		church activities	
storm, heavy rain or flood		maternity leave	
vacation		paternity leave	
lack of instructional materials		suspension	
relationship with supervisor		jury duty	
wedding		military training	
other (specify)		other (specify)	

SECTION 2

This section of the questionnaire contained directions and 22 items intended to measure school administrators' stress and burnout. This section was modified and reproduced by special permission of the Publisher, Consulting Psychologists Press, Palo Alto, CA 94303 from ***Maslach Burnout Inventory–Human Services Survey*** *by Christina Maslach and Susan E. Jackson. Copyright 1986 by Consulting Psychologists Press, Inc. All rights reserved. Permission for reproduction of the instrument in this report was not granted.*

SECTION 3

The purpose of this section is to understand what makes school administrators leave their jobs. Below are listed statements made about quitting a school administrator's job. Place a check (✓) in the column next to each statement that best reflects how much *you agree or disagree* with the statement.

MAKE ONE ✓ MARK ON EACH LINE.

Statement	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
I might leave my current school administrator position for a better school administrator position within the next two years.				
I might leave my current school administrator position for a better central office administrator position within the next two years.				
I might leave educational administration all together within the next two years.				
If I quit being a school administrator, it would be because of . . .				
poor working conditions.				
no support from school staff.				
no support from central office administration.				
too much stress.				
poor relationships with parents.				
students' bad attitudes.				
my lack of control over school policies.				
poor benefits (health insurance, retirement, etc.).				
personal health problems.				
too many disagreements about how to run my school.				
not enough school materials and supplies.				
low salaries.				
too many responsibilities.				
pressure from the community.				
retirement.				
promotion.				
poor relationship with teachers.				
poor relationship with staff.				
political reasons.				

Thank you for your assistance. Please return this questionnaire to the large envelope which has been placed on one of the desks in the room.

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